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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

28 October 1980

MEMORANDUM

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Cuba: Capabilities for Military Intervention in Nicaragua

Cuba is capable of deploying approximately 800-1,000 airborne troops to Nicaragua in less than 24 hours.

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- The Cuban Air Force has available 20 AN-26 (CURL) twin engine turbo prop transport aircraft. Each AN-26 can carry 40 fully armed combat troops. Carrying such a load, the AN-26 is capable of flying to any point in Nicaragua and returning to Cuba without refueling. The aircraft can land at unimproved fields or paradrop airborne troops directly over a given target.

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- The Cuban Air Force also has at least 1,000 paratroopers from the Landing and Assault Forces which could be dispatched along with or immediately after the Interior Ministry's "special troops."

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Cuba also has available 5 IL-62 passenger jet aircraft which can carry about 200 passengers each, but require an improved runway. They are capable of landing at a major airfield in Nicaragua

This memorandum was prepared by the Regional Analysis Division of the Office of Strategic Research and the Latin America Division of the Office of Political Analysis. It has been coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for Latin America. Questions and comments may be addressed to Chief, Regional Analysis Division,

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and returning to Cuba without refueling. In addition, the following aircraft, in either the Cuban Air Force or the Cuban national airline, could be used to support a Cuban military operation in Nicaragua: three BB-318 (Bristol Britannia) passenger/cargo aircraft each with a capacity of 100 troops; four IL-18 (COOT) with a capacity of 95; at least ten AN-24 (COKE) with a capacity of 40 to 50; at least two AN-30 (CLANK) with a capacity of 40 to 50; and at least twelve YAK-40 (CODLING) with a capacity of 25 troops. Only the BB-318 Bristol Britannias and the IL-18 COOT aircraft, however, could make the flight to Nicaragua and back without refueling.

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The current estimated strength of the Cuban ground forces is 180,000, with a ready reserve strength of 60,000 personnel. In the event of mobilization, a call-up of all reserves and an integration of all para-military forces could increase the size of the ground forces to 700,000.

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The Cubans have an efficient and extensive call-up system that mobilizes ready reservists within 2-4 hours at the local level.

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Cuban forces lack sufficient air and naval transport capabilities for deployment of large numbers of troops on a full scale endeavor, but are easily capable of sustaining a limited operation with specific objectives.

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Conclusion

We believe that the Cubans are capable of dropping 800-1,000 men in Nicaragua to seize a limited objective; i.e., an airport, within 24 hours. Another 1,000 troops could then be deployed within three and a half hours after a landing strip was secured.

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